

Message Text

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51

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 /026 W

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R 060935Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2428

SECDEF WASHDC

CJCS

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

CINCPAC

COMUSSAG

S E C R E T PHNOM PENH 8058

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, CB

SUBJ: VISIT OF COMUSSAG GENERAL VOGT AND BRIEFING OF HIGH
POLITICAL COUNCIL ON THE PLAN FOR THE DEFENSE OF PHNOM PENH

1. AT OUR REQUEST GENERAL VOGT CAME DOWN THIS MORNING FOR THE PRESENTATION TO THE HIGH POLITICAL COUNCIL OF THE PLAN FOR THE DEFENSE OF PHNOM PENH. PRESENT ON THE KHMER SIDE IN ADDITION TO COUNCIL MEMBERS WERE DEFENSE MINISTER U SAY, COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF SOSTHENE FERNANDEZ, MAJGEN HOU HANG SIN, AND LON NOL'S CHIEF ASSISTANT BRIGGEN EK PROEUNG. CHARGE AND CHMEDTC TOOK PART ON OUR SIDE.

2. IN COURSE OF THE MEETING, GENERAL VOGT MADE THESE POINTS:

(A) THE EMG PLAN IS SOUND. GENERAL VOGT SAID THAT IN HIS PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT THE PLAN WOULD, IF FULLY EXECUTED IN THE REMAINING DASY BEFOE AUGUST 15, ENABLE THE KHMER TO DEFEAT THE ENEMY ATTACK ON PHNOM PENH, AND TO BEGIN RETAKING LOST GROUND. GENERAL VOGT
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NOTED THAT THE ENEMY, HAVING FAILED IN HIS STRATEGY OF CUTTING THE LOCS HAD NOW SHIFTED TO A DIRECT ATTACK ON PHNOM PENH. THIS NEW STRATEGY REQUIRED THE ENEMY TO CONCENTRATE

HIS TROOPS, AND THUS EXPOSE THEM TO U.S.
AVIATION NOW, AND TO KHMER ARTILLERY AFTER
AUGUST 15.

(B) CONTROL OF THE MEKONG TO NEAK LOEUNG IS AN
ESSENTIAL PART OF THE PLAN, AND THE ATTACK DOWN
ROUTE 1 TOWARDS NEAK LOEUNG MUST KICK OFF
AS SCHEDULED. GENERAL VOGT NOTED THAT
THE ATTACK ON ROUTE 1 WOULD ALSO DRAW ENEMY
TROOPS AWAY FROM THE PHNOM PENH PERIMETER.

(C) THE SECOND ESSENTIAL ASPECT OF THE PLAN IS
THE PROPER COORDINATION AND MASSING OF
ARTILLERY. TO THE SOLDIERS ON THE FRONT,
IT DOESN'T MATTER WHETHER SUPPORT IS BOMBS
OR ARTILLERY SHELLS: IT DOES MATTER THAT
THE SUPPORT BE PROMPT, RESPONSIVE, AND SUFFICIENTLY HEAVY
TO DO THE JOB. IF WELL COORDINATED, THE FIFTY 105'S AND
EIGHT 155'S IN PLACE WILL SUFFICE.

(D) THE ENEMY STRATEGY IS TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION OF STRENGTH
BY STRIKING AT WIDELY SCATTERED POINTS ALONG THE
PERIMETER AND BY TERRORIST
ACTIVITIES WITHIN THE CITY. THE KHMER LEADERSHIP, GENERAL
VOGT SAID, MUST NOT BE OVERLY IMPRESSED BY SUCH ATTACKS.
AFTER SIX MONTHS OF OFFENSIVE, THE ENEMY IS OVER-EXTENDED,
TIRED, AND HAS TAKEN VERY HEAVY LOSSES. IF GKR LEADERSHIP
AND WILL HOLD, THE ENEMY DOES NOT HAVE THE POWER TO DESTROY FANK
FORCES.

(E) FANK FORCES ALSO HAVE TAKEN SUBSTANTIAL LOSSES, WHICH
MUST NOW BE MADE GOOD THROUGH NEW RECRUITMENT. THUS THE
CONSCRIPTION CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED BY THE GOVERNMENT MUST BE
MADE TO WORK, AND THIS ONLY THE CIVILIAN SIDE OF GOVERNMENT CAN
ASSURE. IN THE END THE SIDE THAT IS MOST SUCCESSFUL AT
RECRUITMENT WILL WIN.

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(F) TO MAKE SURE THAT THE GKR HAS THE MEANS TO DEFEAT ITS
ENEMIES, THE UNITED STATES WILL CONTINUE ALL ITS LOGISTIC
SUPPORT ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING Airlift AND AIRDROP, AND ALL ITS
INFORMATION GATHERING ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING AERIAL RECONNAISSANCE.

(G) LEADERSHIP WILL BE A KEY FACTOR. GENERAL VOGT SAID THAT
THE GKR WAS FORTUNATE IN THE LEADERSHIP GIVEN BY THE HIGH
POLITICAL COUNCIL, BUT CAUTIONED THAT SOLIDARITY AMONG ITS
MEMBERS IS ESSENTIAL TO SUCCESS.

3. BOTH GENERAL VOGT AND CHARGE TOLD THE COUNCIL THAT
THEIR INSTRUCTIONS WERE TO PROVIDE EVERY SUPPORT TO THE
KHMER CONSISTENT WITH U.S. LEGISLATIVE AUTHORITIES SO THAT

THE REPUBLIC COULD DEFEAT ITS ENEMCES. AS ALWAYS IN MEETINGS OF THIS SMRT, MARSHAL LON NOL DID MUCH OF THE TALKING ON THE KHMER SIDE, EXPRESSING GRATITUDE FOR U.S. ASSISTANCE, CONFIDENCE IN THE ABILITY OF THE KHMER TO HOLD, AND RENEWING HIS PERENNIAL HOPE FOR MORE ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIERS. THE HIGH POLITICAL COUNCIL RECEIVED THE BRIEFING OF THE DEFENSE PLAN BY MAJGEN HANG SIN WITHOUT COMMENT. HOWEVER TOWARDS THE END OF THE 90-MINUTE MEETING, IN TAM BROACHED THE SUBJECT OF THE GKR SUCCESS THESE LAST DAYS IN DISCOVERING SIX ARMS CACHES WITHIN THE CITY, FOR WHICH HE TAKES CREDIT, AND A MOST ANIMATED EXCHANGE FOLLOWED.

4. COMMENT: PURPOSE OF THE MEETING WAS TO HELP BUILD SUPPORT BEHIND THE DEFENSE PLAN AND TO ENGAGE THE LEADERSHIP, ESPECIALLY THE CIVILIANS, MORE FULLY IN ITS EXECUTION. WITH CHARACTERISTIC KHMER SHORTSIGHTEDNESS, SOSTHENE HAD INITIALLY BEEN RELUCTANT TO BRING IN THE LEADERSHIP AT ALL, ARGUING THAT THE PLAN WAS QTE A MATTER FOR THE MILITARY UNQTE.

5. IT IS DIFFICULT TO SAY HOW WELL ENGAGED THE HIGH POLITICAL COUNCIL NOW IS, GIVEN THEIR RESERVE THROUGHOUT MOST OF THE MEETING, BUT AT LEAST THEY NOW KNOW THAT THERE IS A PLAN WHICH, IF FULLY EXECUTED, WE BELIEVE WILL DEFEAT THE ENEMY. HOPEFULLY MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL WILL FOLLOW UP AND INFORM THEMSELVES MORE FULLY OF ITS TERMS. MEANWHILE WE BELIEVE THAT GENERAL
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VOGT'S FORCEFUL EXPRESSION OF HIS CONFIDENCE IN PHNOM PENH'S HOLDING WILL SINK IN.
ENDERS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 10 MAY 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: CIVIL DEFENSE, MILITARY VISITS, MILITARY PLANS, MEETINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 AUG 1973
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: kelleyw0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1973PHNOM08058
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: 11652 GDS
Errors: n/a
Film Number: P750008-2257
From: PHNOM PENH
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1973/newtext/t19730869/abqcegod.tel
Line Count: 146
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, TEXT ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: kelleyw0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 31 OCT 2001
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <31-Oct-2001 by kelleyw0>; APPROVED <31-Oct-2001 by kelleyw0>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: VISIT OF COMUSSAG GENERAL VOGT AND BRIEFING OF HIGH POLITICAL COUNCIL ON THE PLAN FOR THE DEFENSE OF PHNOM PENH
TAGS: MOPS, US, CB, (VOGT), (EK PROEUNG), (SOSTHENE FERNANDEZ), (HOU HANG SIN), (FERNANDEZ, SOSTHENE)
To: STATE
SECDEF
CJCS INFO BANGKOK
SAIGON
CINCPAC
COMUSSAG

Type: TE

Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005